

Staffing Changes to ERC, PHERD

Gary Couch joined the ISDH Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response Division (PHERD) on November 8 as a program director E5. A retired Colonel with the Indiana National Guard, Gary was formerly the Director of Plans, Operations and Training for the Military Department of Indiana, and has training in national security, counterterrorism, and civil emergency management. Gary will oversee the preparedness and response activities for Focus Area A of the federal bioterrorism grant and supervise the district public health coordinators. He will be stationed at 2 North Meridian with an office on 6 Selig. Gary may be reached at gcouch@isdh.state.in.us.

Shawn George joined the PHERD on November 8 as the Public Health Coordinator for District 1. She has experience working in hospitals, private laboratories, and with the American Red Cross. Shawn will be based at the District 1 office in Lake County and will assist local health departments in Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Newton, and Porter counties. Shawn may be reached at sgeorge@isdh.state.in.us.

Deb Hopseker, formerly the field supervisor with the ISDH Immunization Program, joined the PHERD as the Public Health Coordinator for District 6 on November 8. Deb will be based at the District 6 office in Delaware County and will assist local health departments in Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Howard, Jay, Madison, Randolph, Rush, Tipton, Union and Wayne counties with preparedness planning and funding issues. Deb may be reached at dhopseke@isdh.state.in.us

Becky Lair, formerly the Public Health Coordinator for District 5, became the District 9 Public Health Coordinator on October 25. Becky will assist local health departments in Clark, Dearborn, Decatur, Floyd, Franklin, Harrison, Jefferson, Jennings, Ohio, Ripley, Scott and Switzerland counties with preparedness planning and funding issues. Becky may be reached at rlair@isdh.state.in.us.

Catherine Went joined the PHERD as the Public Health Coordinator for District 4 on November 8. She most recently worked for the Area IV Agency on Aging in Lafayette as an HIV Care Coordination Program Manager. Catherine will be based at the District 4 office in Tippecanoe County and will assist local health departments in Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clinton, Fountain, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, White and Warren counties. Catherine may be reached at cwent@isdh.state.in.us.

Hans Messersmith, Director of the Surveillance and Investigation Unit in the ISDH Epidemiology Resource Center (ERC), left the ISDH on November 5 to pursue an opportunity as a research coordinator for evidence-based medicine at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Hans began his ISDH career in 1990 with the Indoor Air and Radiological Health program as an environmental scientist. In 2000 he joined the Maternal and Child Health program as the data team chief. He joined the ERC in 2001 as an epidemiologist, and became the Director of the Surveillance and Investigation Unit in 2003.

During his tenure as Director of the Surveillance and Investigation Unit, Hans coordinated the epidemiology and surveillance activities for Focus Area B of the federal bioterrorism grant as well as administering the federal Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant. He also contributed his skills and expertise to investigations of monkeypox, SARS, and dozens of other outbreaks. Hans has helped create several informational technology programs to benefit the ERC, including a reportable disease electronic surveillance system, an outbreak data management system, and a web site management tool for the upcoming ISDH Communicable Disease Manual. He also has spearheaded the ISDH syndromic surveillance program, which will provide invaluable data to alert the ERC about potential public health crises. We wish him and his family well and we will greatly miss him.